

A
SERMON
AGAINST
CORRUPTING
THE
WORD of GOD,
Preacht at *CHRIST CHURCH*
IN
MANCHESTER

Upon a Publick Occasion on the 11th Day
of July, 1696.

By *Thomas Gipps* Rector of *BURY*.

*Cur non ad Græcæ Originem revertentes ea, quæ à vitiosis Interpretibus
male reddita, vel à presumptoribus imperitis emendata perversius, vel à
librariis dormitantibus aut addita sunt aut mutata, corrigimus?
S. Hieronymus. Præfatione in 4. Evangelia ad Damasum.*

L O N D O N,
Printed for *Ephraim Johnston* Bookseller
in *Manchester*, 1697.



TO THE
RIGHT HONOURABLE
W I L L I A M

Earl of Derby, Lord of Man, and
the Isles, &c.

My Lord,

I Have been Perswaded by some Private Friends, that the Publication of the following Discourse is not at this time of day to be declin'd. Some People will, doubtless, be angry, that their foul Play is brought upon the Stage, and thus openly taxt. For this reason, I am bold to engage Your Lordship in my Interests, and to shelter my self under Your Great and Honourable Name. Your Honour will (I hope) the more easily pardon me herein, since Your own Interest also is not a little concern'd. It is not my Disposition to expose any Mans Mistake, whilst it keeps in doors, and contains its self within any bounds of Modesty and Privacy. In this case, certainly 'tis better to mourn for it in secret, at most to rebuke it in a Corner. But when 'tis made Notorious; when it boldly stares us in the Face and is avow'd for Truth, when an Error, which one would have hop'd was an unwilling One, is Supported by another, which must be Confest and Believ'd a wilful One: That is, when the Presbyterian Government (or Congre-

The Epistle, &c.

gational, I can't tell which) is publicly maintain'd by a Text of Scripture manifestly Corrupted, surely 'tis high time then to make the World Sensible of the Artifice. I had some Years before Discover'd the False Reading here spoken of, but held my peace. At length, when I found that the Corruption, like a Gangren, had spread its self into several Editions of the Bible here in England, and, God knows, how many in Scotland, and there vouch't for Good, I could not prevail with my self to be silent any longer, and I hope the same Good Zeal will Inspire Your Honour with a Resolution to Discountenance such Injuries Offer'd unto the Holy Word of God. Nor is this the only Instance of the kind. In the Dissenters Petition for Peace above years since, Acts 15. 18. v. is thus cited----To lay upon you no greater burden than necessary things, that small word these being cunningly left out meerly to support their Proposition, Mr. B--- who drew up the Petition, and since has been publickly charg'd for thus abusing the Scripture, tho' he forgot not to Acquaint us with the most trivial, yea a ridiculous, Passages of his Life, yet had not the Ingenuity to confess his Error, nor yet the Courage to Paliat it with any Excuse. My Lord, I have now done, after I shall have made a publick Acknowledgment, as I now do, of the many great singular Favours receiv'd from Your Honour thro' the Course of almost thirty years Service, and have also farther assur'd You, that I am as in Duty bound,

Champ.
Chal. ac-
cepted by
Dr. Hook
late Vi-
car of
Halifax.

Right Honourable,

Your Lordships, Most Humble,
and Most Obedient Servant, and
Chaplain, THO. GIPPS.

 PROV. xxx. 6. v.

Add not thou unto his Word lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a Liar.

THE Argument I am about to treat of is weighty, and not easily compriz'd in one single Discourse. It will therefore concern me to husband my time as thriftily as may be, and chiefly to lay aside all thoughts of further Preface.

The Text is a Negative Precept forbidding all manner of Corrupting the Holy Scriptures, and that under a double Caution :

1. *Lest God reprove thee* for it, a terrible Intimation.

2. *Lest thou be found a Liar*, One of the most detestable Sins in the sight both of God and Man. That by *His Word* is meant the Word of God is manifest from the Verse foregoing--- *Every Word of God is pure*, Then it follows--- *Add not thou unto his Word*, i. e. to the Word of God. That we at this day are to understand hereby the written Word or Scriptures is not to be question'd, there being now no other Word of God, but that which is written for our Instruction, upon whom the ends of the world are come. 1 Cor. 10. 11.

When the Prophet *Agur* says, *Add not*, He must be supply'd thus, neither diminish from the Word. For so the Parallel places in the *Mar-*
gent do warrant, *Ye shall not add unto the Word,*
Deut. 4. 2. & 12. 32. neither shall ye diminish ought from it. Thou shalt
not add thereunto neither diminish from it, said *Mo-*
ses to the *Israelites*: For the Holy Spirit does not always express things to the full, but leaves 'em oft times to be made up out of some other places; hinting here but briefly what elsewhere he more fully sets forth. For which reason therefore I would read the Text thus, *Add not thou unto his Word, neither diminish ought from it.* And then (as I said) the Text is level'd against all manner of Corrupting the Word. One Eminent Instance of which I shall produce by and by, the chief Reason of my undertaking this Subject. I will confine my self unto the Precept, in handling whereof my method shall be:

1. To lay before you Negatively some Cases; which though they may seem to be, yet are not adding to, nor diminishing from, the Word.
2. I will shew positively when we either add or diminish, or both, contrary to the Precept here given. Negatively, &c. And that in the following cases: It is not in adding unto the Word, when we explain and fill up any Passage of Scripture out of some other places... wherein we find the Truth more fully express.

For

For, in this consists the very Office and Duty of a Preacher, and Explainer of the Scripture. And this I plead for my sufficient Warrant in taking the liberty of supplying the Text out of other Parallel Places, as you see I have done. 2. It is not diminishing from the Word, when we omit the *Hebrew* Titles of the *Psalms*; Nor is it adding to the Word when we prefix the *Latine* Titles to 'em.

There was of late a Gentleman who in defence of Nonconformists alledg'd against the establisht Worship. " That in the *Psalms* used " in the Liturgy are left out the Antient *Hebrew* " Titles, which are (*says he*) Original and Parts " of the H. Scripture, having a tendency to- " wards the unfolding the Mysteries therein " contain'd. And he quarrels at the *Latine* Titles prefixt thereunto. But it were well if the Dissenters, whose Cause he pleads, would first prove that those *Hebrew* Titles are Original and Essential Parts of the Holy Scripture, and then if they are so, that they would give us a Reason why in that very Translation, which they approve and make use of, those Original Titles are indeed retain'd; but in the *Hebrew* Language still in many *Psalms* and unintelligible to the People; or why the Translation of 'em into plain *English*, is not always placed at the head of the *Psalms*, but often cast into the

Mr. De
Laune in
Lr. to Dr.
Calamy
page 43.

Margent, as if they were something else than Scripture; neither of which ought to be, if these Titles be part of, and so useful towards, the unfolding the Sense of the *Psalm*. And hereupon I ask whether this is not a sufficient Intimation, that they are not of a Certainty, what they are confidently affirm'd to be, *Viz.* Original. I would moreover be resolv'd what those Mysteries are which those *Hebrew* Titles do unfold: Whether the Dissenters read 'em to their Congregations, and if they do, whether the People are one jot the wiser or understand the Mysteries of the *Psalter*, ever a whit the better for 'em. Lastly, I desire to know, why they do not affix 'em, or rather the Translation of 'em to the

In Metre
and like-
wise sing
'em: All
which
ought to be
done, if
they are es-
sential
Parts of
the *Psalms*

front of the *Psalms*. But if they desire to be excused these smaller faults, be it so yet, *Aequum est peccatis veniam poscentes reddere rursus.*

Let then the World judge, whether this Author sought not an occasion of quarrel against us: and yet found none, except what involves his own Party in the same condemnation. As for the *Latine* Titles they are (any one may know,) but the first words of every *Psalm*, and so by consequence undoubted Parts of Scripture, as edifying too as the *Hebrew* Titles are. In short, that they are borrow'd from the *Romanists*, may be granted and defended too. For so were the *Hebrew* Titles from the *Modern Jews*.

Yea the
whole *He-*
brew Bi-
ble.

'Tis

'Tis not, I confess, worth while to take Notice of such Stuff as this, and I am really asham'd of the Digression. But the Peevishness of an Adversary will sometimes extort a Reply, tho' it deserves it not; and it may be fit now and then to let the Contentious see their own Folly and Frowardness.

I conclude then that the leaving out the *Hebrew* Titles is no diminishing, nor the affixing the *Latine* an adding to, the Word of God.

3. It is not diminishing from the Word, when we, intending to feed the flock of Christ with the sincere Milk of the Word, read some few Verses of a Chap. omitting the rest for that time. The foremention'd Writer excepts against the reading the Epistles and Gospels, telling us, thus. *De L.*
 " That 'tis a curtailing or mangling the Scrip- *page 44*
 " tures, that thereby they become quite another
 " thing than the Evangelists intended in the
 " Gospels, or the Apostles in the Epistles, alto-
 " gether ruining the Scope and Connexion in
 " divers places. It is the manner of some Men
 to accuse stoutly, and in the general without
 offering any one Instance to shew the Truth of
 their objection. For tho' nothing be prov'd,
 yet something will stick, and at this rate who
 can hope to be found innocent?

But it might upon second Thoughts have
 been remembred, That the Dissenters 'emselves
 oft-times

oft-times ſing but two, ſometimes but one Staff of a *Pſalm*, and yet this is not a curtailing and mangling the *Pſalms*: That the Scriptures were not divided by the inſpired Pen-men into Chapters, as well as not into theſe ſhorter Paragraphs or Sections, which we call *Epistles* and *Gofpels*; that there is a Connexion many times between Chapter and Chapter, and yet the reading of a ſingle Chapter is not accounted a making the Scripture to become quite another thing than was intended. *Loripedem Reſtus deridat, Aethiopem Albus*. Surely it might have been remembered, that there are two ſorts of Senſes in every ſmall Section of Scripture.

1. A Relative.

2. A Separate or Independent Senſe. The Relative Senſe (it's true) cannot be underſtood without the Neighbouring Parts; but however is not thereby quite ruin'd. In ſaying ſo the Gentleman o'reſhot himſelf, and by objecting too much, prov'd nothing at all againſt us. For to omit is not to deſtroy. And if it be neceſſary to read as much Scripture at one time, as there is a Connexion between the Parts, then muſt the Diſſenters read many Chapters together, peradventure whole Books, and ſing ſome of the longeſt *Pſalms* without Intermiſſion, which is impoſſible.

Finally then, if the Diſſenters can ſhew any
one

one Epistle or Gospel, wherein the Relative Sense is altogether ruin'd, or the separate Sense in any wise injur'd. I promise then to subscribe to the Objectors judgment in this and all others his rash accusations of us. When O Lord, O when shall we find Truth and Peace and Sincerity upon the Earth? When shall all unnecessary Squabbles cease from among us Men?

4. It is not adding to the Word, when several Passages tending to the same purpose, tho' found in distant places or different Books of Scripture, yet are cast into one complex Sentence or Sentences, as it were depending one of another. The *Ubi Su-* so oft mention'd Gentleman Objects; *That in pra.* the Liturgy Translation of the Psalms, three whole verses are joisted into the 14th Psalm immediately after the 3d. They run thus " Their Throat is an " open Sepulchre, with their Tongues have they " deceiv'd thee: Poison of Asps is under their " Lips &c. Which (says he) are not in any of the " Original Copies. But hold here I pray. Have not the inspired Pen-men of the New Testament quoted some Texts out of the Old from remote Places and Authors, twisting 'em together as one entire and complex Passage? Doubtless there are Examples of this kind to be met with; I will content my self with a single one. Then *1 Cor. 15.* shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death *54, 55.* is swallow'd up in Victory. O Death, where is thy Sting?

O Grave where is thy Victory ? And yet this Saying,
 being borrow'd Part from the Prophet I say, and
Isa. 25. 8. Part from *Hoseah*, is by *St. Paul* cited as one sin-
Hof. 13. gle and intire Testimony of Scripture. In like
14. manner, these three Verses are to be found at least
 scatter'd up and down in the Book of *Psalms*, part
See Is. 59. in the 5th *Psf.* 9th v. and part in the 140th *Psf.* 2^d
 7, 8. and 3^d Verses.

Deut. 32. 33. If this answers not Expectation, I add further,
 That *St. Paul* in the 3^d Chap. to the *Romans*, has
 subjoyn'd the 3. Objected Verses, immediately
 to the 3^d v. of the 14th *Psf.* " As it is written
 " (says he,) There is none that doth good, no not
 " one: Their throat is an open Sepulchre & so on
 " to the end of the three objected Verses. Surely
St. Paul's Epistle to the *Rom.* may at least excuse,
 if not justify, this suppos'd Alteration of the
Psalms. It is rather to be feared that the Objector
 himself had a design upon the Scripture: Whilst
 he is accusing us for adding thereto, himself is di-
 minishing from it; and rather than spare us, is
 calling into Question the great Apostle of the
Gentiles for adding to the Word.

But above all, with what Effrontery could this
 learned Man & skill'd in the Original Languages
 (as he pretends,) tell his Readers, that those three
 Verses are not in any of the Original Copies? Per-
 haps his own Party has hitherto believ'd him,
 but if they will give me leave, I'll open their eyes
 in

in a very few words. For (not to take Notice of that absurd saying *Original Copies*, which he would or should have said *Copies of the Original*,) what are we to think of the *Greek*? That certainly is to be accounted One of the Originals, if there be more than One, as himself seems to intimate. And there I read just as I read in the Liturgy Translation, and as I read in *St. Paul*. Again I might say with the learned *Vossius*, that the *Greek Copy*, for ought I know, is of as good Authority as the *Hebrew* at this day is, and for my Reasons I send you to his History of the 70 Translation: Only take this along with you, that (as has been already noted) *St. Paul* (which also the other holy Writers of the New Testament generally do in other places) follows the *Greek*, and not the *Hebrew Copy* in citing this 14th *Psalms*, which is no contemptible Argument for the Authority of the 70 Translation. Briefly, we have this further Advantage on our side, that 'tis more Probable the three controverted Verses might be left out of the *Hebrew Copies*, by the carelessness of the Transcribers, than thrust into the *Greek* by the Translators. 'Tis easier (supposing 'em both honest and sincere) for Transcribers to omit, than Translators to add so much together of their own head.

5. 'Tis not adding to, nor diminishing from, nor corrupting the Word, when we Translate it into Vulgar Tongues. All Christians have done

so. Yea the Romanists themselves in former Ages did so, tho' of late, they have been contrary minded for fear forsooth of mistaking the Word, or cor-

Anastasi rupting it. O Fools and slow of heart ! One of the
Patr. of Ancients has affirm'd, that the version of the Scrip-
Ant. apud tures into many Languages, is the best way to preserve
Uferii Hist. 'em uncorrupt. Besides, why do they suffer the Word
Dogma. to be Transcribed or Printed at all or in any Lan-
Mulsarum guage ? Doubtless the Word of God may be
Gentium corrupted by Transcribing or Printing it, as well
linguis as by Translating it. Transcribing we know was,
Scriptura & Printing now a days is the Work often of igno-
Translata rant & mechanical Men, who are more liable to
docet falsa mistakes : but Translating is the business of the
esse que Learned. Ay, but St. *Jerom* confess himself subject
addita to mistakes in Translating the Scripture. Very
sunt. Hie- good ! and yet he Translated it for the use of the
ron Præ- Latine Christians, and his Translation is for the
fat. ad 4. E most part read unto this day. Why then may not
vang. a Learned Priest or Bishop now a days render it
 into the Italian, as well as *Jerom* formerly did into

Sec. l. 4.

c. 33.

Sex. l. 6.

c. 37.

Philist. l.

2. c. 6.

apud Afr.

ibid.

the Latine and Da'matick ? As St. *Chrysostom* into the Armenian, As *Ulphilas* into the Gothick, Or as the Ancients did every one into his own Tongue. " For it was anciently done into many different Tongues says *Hesychius* of Jerusalem : Into 72. " Says *Anastasi*us of Antioch : Into innumerable " Tongues says St. *Chrysostom* : Into the Languages of all Nations of the Earth, that had receiv'd

the

“ the Faith, says *Theodore*: Yea into every Tongue
 “ under the Sun says *Eusebius*. In short even at this
 day, we have a Noble Monument of the Judgment
 and Practice of Antiquity, I mean the *Polyglot Bibles* : So that the Catholick Church in the
 Primitive Times, might have said as the *Jews* did,
2d Acts, That they heard and read every one in his own
 Tongue the wonderful Works and WORDS of God. But
 setting aside this, that it should be lawful and safe
 to have the Scripture Translated into *Latin* only,
 is to me a strange *Paradox*. For what Priviledge
 has God bestow'd on the *Latin* more than on o-
 ther Tongues ? All certainly one as well as the o-
 ther are capable of Mistakes and Corruptions,
 The *Hebrew* indeed had once the Honour of be-
 ing the Holy Language and (as I may say,) the
 immediate Vehicle of the Divine Will. The *Greek*
 succeeded next into it's Room. The reason of
 both is obvious. The Word of God was
 first directly intended for the *Israelites* only ,
 therefore first wrote in *their Tongue*: Afterwards
 for the whole World, therefore wrote in the most
 Vulgar and Common Language the *Greek*. Yet so
 as that by degrees it was Translated into every
 Language, to the end, that the Knowledge of the Lord *Is. 11. 9.*
 might cover the Earth, as the Waters cover the Sea.

The Inscription on the Cross was wrote in *La-
 tin*. True! But 'twas by the command of *Pontius Pi-
 late*, that accursed Crucifier of our Lord, in ho-
 nour of his own Language, and for the better in-

His Coun-
try Men.

formation of the *Romans*. Yet who can say that the *Evangelists* in their *Greek*, and inspired Histories, continu'd it afterwards in the same *Latine* Tongue ? I never yet somuch as heard of any M. S. or Printed *Greek* Testament with the *Latin* Inscription retain'd in it. Moreover we know that as no *Hebrew* nor *Greek*, so no *Latin* Bible is an Original ; nor indeed is there any such thing as an Original at this day. All our Bibles, in whatever Language, are either Translations or Transcripts, which is the same thing to our present purpose, both, as I said, being liable to mistakes.

Finally, then the Word of God is his Word, be it in what Language it will, and as much the Word of God in one, as in another, there being (as I have said) no Original at this day. Briefly, one may add or diminish in Transcribing and Printing, as well as in Translating : Therefore either both or neither are to be laid aside.

6. It is not adding to the Word, when a new Prophet arising delivers some further Messages to the Churches, which are affixt to the Canon of Scripture. For the Rule in the Text runs thus, *Thou shalt not add*, speaking unto us Men. Nevertheless God may add to it when ever he pleases, and whatever he thinks fit. So that all the following Books of Scripture were, notwithstanding my Text, added to the Canon unto the end of the *Revelations*, where (for ought we yet know) the Book
is

is shut up in these Words. " For I certifie unto every Man, that heareth the Words of the Prophecie of this Book ; if any Man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the Plagues that are written in this Book : And if any Man shall take away from the Words of the Book of this Prophecie, God shall take away his Part out of the Book of Life, and out of the Holy City, and from the things, which are written in this Book. Which brings me to the 2. Head; *sc.* To shew positively when we add or diminish ought from the Word of God. And first of Diminishing,

1. Then we diminish from the Word, when we cast away any, never so little Part of it. Wonderful was the Care of the *Jews* herein, and Religious they were to Superstition (as may be thought) counting the very Letters of the Bible to preserve it intire. Hereunto our Lord alludes---Till Heaven and Earth pass away not one jot or tittle shall pass from the Law. Where tho' he is not speaking of the outward Letter as I now am, but of the Intrinsic and Mystical Truths, which were to be fulfilled in Christ, and ever to remain in force : Yet (however) he suits his Expression unto the *Jews* Curiosity in keeping the Word from being diminished in the least Point.

But yet Interest has a Byas. Instance M^r. has charg'd the *Jews* home with this Practice

cing

Rev. 22.

18, 19.

Mat. 5.

18.

Dial. cura

Tryph.

cing in several Passages out of *Ex. Neh. the Psal. Isa. Jer. and Ezek.* that were expung'd, because they seem'd too plainly to point at Jesus Christ. And all the World knows the Papists, in their Catechism at least, have assum'd and exercis'd a like expurgatory Power, upon the second Commandment. Much more,

2. Then we diminish from the Word, when we reject whole Books, as the *Sadducees and Samaritans* of Old did all but the 5. Books of *Moses*, and as many over Subtil and Wickedly Critical Wits among the Christians have done, calling in to Question many intire Books of the New Testament, and some there are who have endeavour'd to eashiere 'em all. But,

3. We diminish from the Word, when we lay it aside as not a Necessary, or not the Supreme Rule of Faith. This is to diminish from it's Authority. Some either Weak or Hypocritical Christians in Times of Old deliver'd up their Bibles to their Persecuters, and for so doing were Brand-ed with that disgraceful Name of Traditors, Traitors. And yet questionless they had, or might have had, the usual Exeuses at hand, which are currant now adays. " That they had the Light
" within 'em, to guide 'em into all Truth, That
" they had other Lights without 'em, The Writ-
" ings of Holy and Learned Men, The assi-
" stance of Bishops and Priests and the infallible
" Popes,

“ Popes, The daily Conversation of the Faith-
 “ ful, and the Decrees of Councils to direct and
 “ instruct ’em : Moreover, that the Truths and
 “ Mysteries of the Gospel (whatever became of
 “ of the written Word) might be transmitted by
 “ Oral Tradition unto Posterity ; and upon the
 “ whole matter, that there was no necessity of
 “ the written Word of God. But these new Pre-
 texts, notwithstanding the Church, condemn’d
 their Treachery : All which shews that in the
 Judgment both of the Church, and of the Perse-
 cuters too, neither the Light within, nor the
 Writings of Holy Men, nor the Decrees of Coun-
 cils, nor the Infallibility of the Popes, nor Oral
 Tradition, nor all of ’em, were sufficient to up-
 hold the Doctrine of Christianity ; and this de-
 monstrates the necessity of the written Word of
 God, & that ’tis the only Necessary and Supreme
 Rule of Faith.

There is a pernicious Law among the Ro-
 manists, forbidding the People to Read the Scrip-
 ture, which is a great Diminution of at least the
 Honour, the Sufficiency and Perspicuity of the
 Word.

’Tis pretended that it was found, *certissimo* Council.
Experimento, that ignorant and malicious Men Trid. Bel-
 did improve it unto Errours and Heresies by mi- larmin.
 staking or depraving its meaning. But this is a &c.
 meer shift to palliate the Injury done to the
 Word

Word of God, contrary to the sense and practice of all Antiquity. For our Predecessors in the Faith, I mean, the Ancient Fathers, this Obj. notwithstanding, were wont constantly to call upon all the Faithful without distinction to read the Word, telling 'em, " It was not like " *Plato's* Philosophy, or *Pythagoras's* Cryptical " Discipline, calculated for the Meridian of a " few of the Wiser Sort; but fitted and design'd " for all to read and to understand, for the Wise " and for the Unwise, for Kings of the Earth & " for all People, for Souldiers and for Lawyers, " for Monks and for Citizens of the World, for " Priests and Laymen, for Husbandmen and " Mariners, Artificers and Labourers, for Young " Men and Maidens, Old Men and Children, " and in a word for all Qualities, Ages, Sexes, " Fortunes and Degrees of Men whatever; to " be read in Publick and in Private, and at all " times, as well at Home as Abroad, in the " Church, and in the Fields, and in the Desarts, " and in Journeys, & in a word in every place.

Shall I, by the way, crave leave to offer you a Demonstration (of my own for any thing that I know) against our Adversaries *certissimum Experimentum*, and that out of the Scripture it self too, because I am now pleading in its behalf. See then the second Epistle of *Peter* 1. chap. 19. v. *We have also a more sure word of Prophecy where-*
unto

unto ye do well to take heed as unto a Light that shineth in a dark place, compar'd with the 16. v. of the 1d chap. of the same Epistle, As also in all his Epistles, our beloved Brother Paul has written speaking in 'em of these things, in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unstable and unlearned wrest, as they do all the other Scriptures unto their own Destruction. Out of which Passages I argue thus : " That which Peter the first Pope or Bishop of Rome (and Paul too) commended and encourag'd the People to, (*sc.* to take heed or to give attendance unto the reading of the Word, although it was known by most certain Experience, that some wrested it to Errour and Heresy, and to their own Destruction) that ought not now be deny'd the People, because forsooth there be at this day also some among us that wrest it to their own Destruction: That which was not a competent Reason unto Peter, cannot be a sufficient Warrant unto his Successors, to deprive the People of the Holy Scriptures: What Peter could nor, would nor, do, the Popes at this time of day cannot, should not, presume to do. See 4th Col. 16. & 17. Acts 11. v.

But above all, to advance a Supreme Infal-
 ble and Independent Authority in the Church,
 not Subordinate, yea Superiour, to the Scripture,
 with liberty even to contradict it, is certainly a
 diminishing of the Word, that is, its Sovereignty.

D

The

The Power of the Word is like God himself,
nec parem fert nec superiorem.

The Scripture is the intire body of the Divine Law, who then shall dare to Diminish ought from it, or thwart its Definitions? He that touches the apple of Gods Eye: He claims (as I may say) a share in the Legislative, yea, and makes himself Superior even to God himself.

It was then an impudent Presumption, *crimen laesae Majestatis* in the Council of Constance, to take upon 'em to decree with a *non-obstante*, that tho' the Scripture says, *Drink ye all of this*, yet the Laxity (to whom also they confess it was spoken) shall not drink thereof. Thus they made the Word of God of none Effect by their Traditions, teaching for Doctrines the Commandments of Men, and declared 'em selves above Jesus Christ, that Canon being set above his Word by their own acknowledgment. And thus the Will and the Wisdom of Men took place of the Wisdom and Will of God.

What shall we then think of those, who equal, nay prefer, the private Spirit of the Pope, and o-
 ther the Light within 'em selves, before the Word of God? St. Peter and the Believers he wrote to
 certainly had the Light within, and the Spirit in
 as great abundance as any at this time of day
 can pretend: And yet he tells his Flock---That
 Prophecy of Scripture is of any private Interpretati-
 on: That we have a more sure Word of Prophecy
 whereunto we do well to take heed.

2 Ep. 1.

19. 20.

no not of

any

hisself

Tho'

Tho' he had the Spirit and Light within, tho' he had the Honour and Advantage of seeing Christ Transfigur'd, and hearing the Voice from Heaven, saying---*This is my beloved Son* : Yet for v. 18. the proof of that very Proposition himself relies and exhorts the Faithful to rely rather on the Word of Prophecy, the Scripture, as a more sure Testimony. Surer than what ? Why surer than any private Spirit or private Interpretation, tho' of the Infallible *peter* himself : Surer than seeing Christ's Transfiguration : Surer than hearing the Voice from Heaven : Surer than the Light within. So that the Light within and all other Lights without were Darkness, unless they took heed to that more sure Word the Light of Gods Word. And yet the private Spirit and Light within, forsooth, or that Planetary and false Light of *peters* Successors without, must in these unhappy days of ours give check to the plain Testimony of Scripture, and be prefer'd before it ; As in the use of the Lords Supper, one Part whereof those of the *Roman* Communion are depriv'd of. The *Quakers* reject both Sacraments : And the Lords Prayer many *Dissenters* despise, and other things might be instanced in. In short, what amounts all these spiritual Whymseys to ? But the setting up either that more dimn Light at *Rome*, or the private Light of every Mans own Breast at home above that more sure Word of Scripture, whereunto we should do well to take heed. This is just such a-

nother piece of folly, as if a Man should take his Journey in the night time by the dimnLight of the Moon, or by his own dark-Lanthorne in his hand, refusing the Light of the Sun by Day, which notwithstanding affords a much clearer Light and safer Conduct to the Travel-ler. Lastly,

4. We diminish from the word even when we presume to add any thing to it. For this is as it were to tax it with some suppos'd Defects and Imperfections, which we, forsooth, would supply.

Now then as for adding to the word in the first place.

1. We add to it when any thing is tackt unto the Word not belonging to it. Thus we reckon the *papists* to have made bold with the Scripture, thrusting the Apochryphal Books into the Canon of the Old Testament. But I hasten,

2. We both add to the Word and diminish from it, when we alter it, especially so as that it carries quite another Sense than what was intended by the Spirit of God. And now I am at length come to the Point I chiefly aim'd to insist on. It is to be bewail'd, that so many various Readings have already been thrust into the Sacred Text, no body knows certainly when, nor where, nor by whom, nor on what Occasion, nor upon what Motive and Design. But I will not trouble you nor my self about this, which is

not.

not now to be remedy'd. I will rather advertise you of one of a fresher Date, which yet indeed has not, ought not to have the honour of pretending to a various Lection.

The case in short is this. The Apostles 'emselves had from the beginning exercis'd the Offices of Preaching the Word, of Administring the Sacraments and of Dispensing the Alms gather'd at the Lords Supper. But the Church multiplying and business increasing upon their hands, there happen'd some Occasion of Complaint about the unequal distribution of the said Publick Alms. Whereupon the Apostles order'd the multitude, *To seek out Seven* Acts. 6.3. *Men of Honest report, and full of the Holy Ghost and Wisdom, whom We (as some of our English Bibles have it or), whom Ye (as others) may appoint over this business.* And hence a Question may be started, whether the People or the Apostles did appoint those Seven unto the Offices aforesaid, and by consequence, whether the People or the Bishops have Authority to appoint the Parochial Ministers. My business here is not to Argue that Point, but to Examin into this various Reading, which I shall do in resolving three Enquiries.

1. Which of the two Readings is the true one?

The Resolution whereof is very ealy. The Place ought to run thus-- *Whom We may appoint over the business.* In proof of this (if any should doubt it) I appeal to all the MSS and Printed Copies of the Greek Testament, I appeal to all the Collections of vari-

ous.

ous Readings, I appeal to the Bibles into whatever Language Translated, I appeal to all the *English* Versions and Impressions till of late, and I appeal to the History of the whole Fact here laid down, which supposes it of necessity. The Apostles had had that Business of Distributing the publick Alms in their own hands from the beginning, therefore they (not the People) delegated the Seven to it : Therefore it's not to be read *Ie* but *We*. But then the next Enquiry is,

2. When did this Corruption steal first into the Text ? Answer, I will not be peremptory in this : But so far as my Diligence and Observation (which has not been a little, and mannaged with all Care & Faithfulness) is able to carry me, I must say, that it crept in first in the Year 1638. In that very Year, there was a Fair Bible in Folio Printed at Cambridge with this *Erratum*, and this is the first time I have yet been able to discover the Corruption.

By Tho.
Buck, and
Rog. Da-
niel Prin-
ters to the
Universi-
ty : The
latter of
which was
indeed the
manmager
of the Press,
and in the
Interest of
that Pres-
byterian
Party.

By the way, here I must beg your favourable Construction of this Remark. It is with the greatest Aversion and infinite Regret, that I am forced upon this occasion to bewray my own Nest, and to speak out this great Truth to at least the seeming Dishonour of my own Mother University, from whose Breasts I suckt in all that little Knowledge I pretend unto. And this too in the Presence and the Hearing of some of the most Ingenious and Learned Children of her Rival Sister, who has (for ought I can learn) been somewhat happier in this kind.

But

But, however, as to the Fact so it came to pass, that while the chief Stewards of the Family were otherwise employ'd, and the inferiour Servants (I think) sleeping, the Enemy sow'd these Tares, which have been growing ever since until now. This may suffice to point at the time when this Error first enter'd into our *English* Bibles, *sc.* in the Year 38. But,

Who then brought in this false Reading, or what Party among us at least encourag'd and promoted it since?

It is an Enquiry worthy to be made, and a clear and full discovery would deserve an *Hecatomb*. And tho' I will not promise so much, yet something I have to offer towards it, which tho' it amounts not to a direct Proof against any Persons, yet I think may pass for a good Circumstantial One. To my purpose then,

I will not be so Positive as to Avert, that it was at first industriously done, yet I must call into Question the Dissenters, as Persons suspected to have secretly contributed to the Corruption of this Place, at least, to the Continuance and Increase of it, and that upon the following Accompts.

1. Because the Alteration happen'd in the Year 38. Presbytery being then in the Ascendant, I say just in that nick of time, when all things were in Preparation, and tended to the Subversion of Episcopacy, Scotland having already made a Conspiracy, and bound 'em selves under a Curse to Extripate it, and *England*, even a great part of the Universities.

fries 'em selves, running into the same excess of riot. So that here is a Concurrence of the Circumstance of time, and a shrewd one too, sufficient to ground a suspicion on.

2. The Corruption in Appearance favours the Dissenters and their Design against Episcopacy. If then any, they may be suspected for being willing to have it at least continu'd and propagated.

3. On the contrary, it cannot, with any Colour of Reason, be imagin'd, that the Episcopal Party design'd to Corrupt this Place, or to Connive at it's Corruption, except they shall be thought *Felones de se*, and willingly and knavishly to destroy what they endeavour zealously to establish. Satan (as our Lord argues) cannot be thought to cast out Satan, and to throw down his own Kingdom. Nor will any one of Sense believe, that the Episcopal Party were willing to have that thrust out of the Scripture, upon which their Church Government seems to be built; Or to substitute in its room, what in Appearance overthrows their Politie.

4. That Party ought in all Reason to be Suspected of foul Play herein, who, admitting they did not at first on set, purpose, contrive the Corruption of this place, yet now, belike, contribute to the Confirming and Vindicating it, and under the Colour of this new Text of Scripture, assert and support the new Popular Government of the Church, as some of the *Presbyterians* do at this day.

For the Proof of which Charge upon 'em, I need only

(23)
only to put you in mind of that memorable Story, which doubtless ye have many of you heard of, how that a *Cameronian* (one of the most rigid Sects of the *Scotch* Presbyterians) Preaching some years since concerning the Peoples Power of setting up their own Teachers, & having confirm'd his Point with some Reasons of his own (the Principal whereof was, I guess, that it was most agreeable to the Inclination of the *Scotch* Nation, which is just such another Reason as an Adulterer also might give for his Wantonness.)

But, I say, having prov'd his Point as he thought (no matter to us how) at length bid his Audience not to believe him, but to turn to their Bible, and so sent them incontinently to the *6. Act. 3. v.* where they might find their Character in these Words---*Whom YE (the Multitude of Believers) may appoint over this Business.* But whether this be a good Character, or has on it the stamp of Divine Authority, let the World judge by what has been already said. For a Conclusion then I would crave leave to address,

1. Unto all the Faithful in general; Men, Brethren and Fathers suffer me to entreat you in a few words, with all diligence, to preserve the Word of God pure and uncorrupt. If once the Fountain-head be poyson'd, the Streams will be so too, and from thenceforth we shall never be able to distinguish between the Doctrines and Will of God, and the Inventions and Inclinations of Men. The Adversaries of Christianity, with design to overthrow

E

the

Printed at
Oxford
Theater
Anno
1675

the whole Frame of our Religion, have already endeavour'd to take advantage of those numerous and various Lections, which in times of darkness and ignorance heretofore stole into the Greek Testament (as I find it taken notice of in a Learned Preface to a late Edition) what then will they say, when they observe the purest Kirk in the World (as is pretended) tampering with, and refining upon, the Word of God at this time of day? But let not us, to serve a Cause, or to draw the simple People into our Interests, let not us (I say) dare to suborn any false Witness whatever, much less out of the Word of Truth. Let us leave that vile Artifice to our Adversaries on both hands. Truth needs not such feeble Supports, but is indeed very much disparag'd and weaken'd thereby. The brightest Truth will receive prejudice when we go about to establish it by a Lie, much more Points in Controversy, when they are varnish'd and washt over with false and fading Colours. 'Tis our Interest therefore, as well as our Duty---To lay aside all Guile and Hypocrisie, and to feed our Flocks with the sincere Milk of the Word. To put away Lying, and to speak every Man Truth with his Neighbour. Let us take to our selves the Example of St. Paul---We are not (says he reflecting upon the Corinthian Schismatics) as many which corrupt the Word of God: But as of Sincerity, but as of God in the sight of God, speak we in Christ. And once more he saith---We have renounced the hidden things of Dishonesty, not walking in Craftiness, nor handling

ling the Word of God *deceitfully*; but by manifestation of the Truth. The Apostle not obscurely hinting in these Words, that the Separatists at Corinth did so.

2. But above all, and with all Submission, I would beg of those, who are in Authority and do humbly propose, that some effectual course be taken to make amends for this at first (I am willing to believe) unfortunate oversight committed (I am ashamed to repeat where) and to vindicate this Place in the *Afts* from the Injury it has suffer'd these Fifty Years past, and upward. How it may in some measure be repair'd is not hard to tell. I have heard of a whole Impression of the Bible condemn'd to be burnt, because the Negative Particle of a Commandment was casually left out. What then if one of every Edition thus deprav'd, or at least one for all, were serv'd after the same manner in *perpetuam rei Memoriam*, and to expose the craftiness of those *Circumcellians* among us, who to advance their design, do not stick, it seems, to promote it by Falshood; and grounding themselves upon a meer Error of the Press, as we will suppose it was at first, deceiving, and being deceived, do lie against the Holy Ghost, and bring a Scandal upon the Word of God, and our holy Religion.

To Conclude, I may happily seem too Warm and Zealous in this matter. Doubtless, some will think so. But upon Examination, having found the first accidental slip repeated since in at least half a dozen Impressions of the Bible here in England,

